AN Earnest Plea FOR PEACE AND MODERATION: IN A SERMON,

PREACHED

At *Barnstaple* in *Devon* to the Ministers, and Others, occasionally there assembled, *Octob.* 17. 1660.

By MARTIN BLAKE *B. D.*

Bernardus de Modo vivendi, Serm. 41.

Necessaria est nobis virtus Concordiæ. Quod si Ego volo facere voluntatem meam, & iste suam, & ille suam, fiunt Divisiones, oriuntur Lites, Iræ quoque & Rixæ, quæ sunt opera Carnis, (sicut ait Apostolus) Qui talia agunt, Regnum Dei non consequentur.

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To the Right Reverend Father

IN GOD

JOHN Lord BISHOP

OF

EXON,

Grace and Peace through Jesus Christ.

Right Reverend,

WHile in a Charitable desire of the Churches and the whole Kingdoms Peace, I first meditated the matters treated of in these ensuing Papers, though but for the Excitation and Encouragement of a lesser Auditory; and was afterwards perswaded, that if sent abroad, they might (through the Divine

Blessing) *conduce in some measure to the benefit of more: I was thereupon willing to cast in this poor mite of mine into the common Treasury. For this cause, and merely to this end, without any other respect that my heart knows, or any the least desire to gall or grieve the Spirits of any; I do here humbly offer my Well-wishings of this kind, to the publick view, beseeching our Gracious God, the God of Love and Peace, so to blesse my weak* (*but cordial*) *endeavours, that they may find in the first place, acceptance with Him, and then* (*through his power*) *a prevalency with Them, who together with my Self* (*though of the meanest and lowest rank*) *are concerned in this holy and great Affair.*

It is not Ambition, but Reverence, that hath induced me to send them thus forth under Your Lordships Patronage, and so to transmit them (*as through Your hands*) *to the Prudent Consideration of my Reverend Fathers and Brethren in the Ministry; especially those whom it hath pleased God, and* (*next under him*) *our Dear Soveraign, to recommend unto Your Lordships care. Nor do I herein presume to give Instructions, or to prescribe Rules to them, that are in my own just*

esteem

eſteem ſo much my Betters, (alas, who am I, that in ſo Grave and Venerable a Society of Learned men, ſhould harbour but a thought of ſo doing?) No, the bent of my Soul is, with a ſoft and gentle breath to quicken up their Holy Zeal, and humbly to beſeech them (every one in his Place and proper Station) to imploy the choiceſt of their greater and more flouriſhing Abilities, toward the allaying of thoſe unkindly heats, and the making up of thoſe deſtructive breaches, which the irregular fancies of this looſe age, (through the juſt Judgement of God upon us for our ſins) have brought upon the Nation, to the downfall (almoſt) of our Religion, and conſequently the undoing of this once flouriſhing, and (let me ſpeak it, on the one ſide without Envy, and without Flattery on the other) truly Apoſtolical Church of England.

Unity in the Church, if founded upon Truth, is a ſweet Ornament, and a great ſupport: and truly, whatever ſome may conceive, I believe the wiſer ſort will Judge, that a decent and wholeſome Uniformity is a ſpecial help, as to the firſt begetting, ſo to the conſtant preſerving of that Unity. Whereas, on the other ſide, a Lawleſſe Multiformity

mity (ſuch as that was which of late years hath born ſo great a ſway, and by an impetuous violence carried down all before it) may juſtly be reputed among the greateſt and ſoareſt Enemies of that deſirable accord, which Chriſtianity perſwades.

How Dolorous and Direfull the effects have been of this many-headed Monſter, to the great diſturbance of our Peace, and the diſſolving (well-nigh) of that goodly Order which St. Paul *commended in the Church at* Coloſſe, chap. 2. 5. *yea, and how much the Un-brotherly contending for ſome fancied particles of a Negative Superſtition, in reference to the mere outward Adminiſtration of our Holy Things, hath ſharpened, I ſay not only the Tongues and Pens, but the Swords and Pikes of the miſ-guided Multitude, our own dear experience can ſadly recompt, and the late twice-repeated Inſurrection of a Rebellious Crew (whoſe deſign, it ſeems, was to have ingaged us once more in a Deſperate and Bloody War) doth ſufficiently demonſtrate.*

The truth is, no better Fruit can be expected from ſuch a Tree. And therefore, what leſſe can the conſideration hereof work in us, (after an humble Recognition and penitent Contrition, in reference

ference to our own manifold demerits) than a Prudent and Zealous care of contributing what we can toward the Quenching of theſe unnatural and inteſtine Flames, together with our moſt inſtant and hearty Prayers unto Almighty God, for his Gracious Direction, and Fatherly Benediction, in and upon our diligence and endeavour that way. And, oh that it would p'eaſe the Divine Goodneſſe (in whoſe hand are the hearts of all men) ſo to inlighten our minds, and faſten our affections upon the Fundamental and Eſſential points of Faith and Godlineſſe, that, laying aſide theſe fierce diſputes, and heart-dividing contentions about Circumſtantial Niceties, we might all meet and joyn together in a Juſt and Peaceable Conformity, and ſo (at once) exerciſe our Piety to God, our Submiſſion to Authority, and our affectionate reſpects of love and kindly aſſiſtance one towards another, ever ſtudying (as much as in us lies) the preſervation of the Unity of the Spirit, in the bond of Peace; the beſt and readieſt way (as Wiſe men deem) to ſilence the Clamours, prevent the Deſignes, and (if the good pleaſure of God be ſuch) to rectifie the Apprehenſions, and reconcile the Hearts of the yet-remaining Sanballats, Tobi-

ahs,

ahs, and Geshems of the time, who by force and fraud, do what they can to interrupt and hinder us (as their Fathers sometime did that good Nehemiah) in repairing the Ruines, and raising up the Walls of our English Jerusalem.

And in Order to all this, that Your Lordship and the rest, who labour under you in this part of the Spiritual Vineyard, may thrive and prosper in your Holy Undertakings, the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ so Blesse and Crown your actions with good successe, that his Name in all things may be glorified, his Truth setled, his Peace restored, your Souls blessed, and the whole Church every day more and more both comforted and enlarged! So prayes,

My Lord,

From my Study in Barnstaple, Jan. 21. 1660.

Your most Humbly devoted Servant,

Martin Blake.

Text.

Text. Psal. 122. 8, 9.

For my Brethren and Companions sake, I will now say, Peace be within thee. Because of the House of the Lord our God, I will seek thy Good.

WHen the people of *Israel*, after their coming out of *Egypt*, were yet in the way to *Canaan*, it pleased God by *Moses* to make known unto them his gracious purpose, that when they should be quietly seated in that promised Land, and be at rest from all their enemies round about, he would then appoint a Place, where to fix his Sanctuary, as you may read, *Deut.* 12. 10. &c. And accordingly his will was, that at some certain times of the year, (*viz.* at Easter, Pentecost, and the feast of Tabernacles) all the Males of the people should come up thither, to perform their religious services unto him, as you may see, *Deut.* 16. 16. compared with the former passage. So carefully did the Divine Wisdom project for the establishment of a well-ordered Uniformity of Religious Worship in a settled State, to prevent distractions, and to preserve Unity among the people.

After this, for the space of many hundred years, the Israelites (notwithstanding) remained in somewhat an unsetled condition; and the Tabernacle, with the Ark,

were oftentimes removed (as in a ſtate of migration) from place to place, until the time of King *David*. So long it pleaſed God to exerciſe his peoples faith, and to hold them in an humble expectation of his performance.

But at length, when the ſeaſon (which God had foredetermined within himſelf) was now at hand, it pleaſed him to make known unto *David*, that *Jeruſalem* in the Tribe of *Judah* ſhould be the City, and Mount *Sion* the place, where his Ark ſhould reſt, and where alſo he would have a Temple built unto his Name, as you may gather from thoſe expreſſions of his, 1 *Chron.* 28. 11, 19. compared with *Pſal.* 76. 1, 2. & 78. 67, 68. With much gladneſs did King *David* liſten to this Oracle of God; and accordingly he had it in his heart, to have performed the whole work himſelf in his own dayes: but being commanded of God to leave the building of the Temple to his ſonne *Solomon*, that ſhould ſucceed him, he contented himſelf as to that particular; only he provided for it ſome materials aforehand; and in the mean ſeaſon addreſſed himſelf to bring up the Ark of the Teſtimony from the houſe of *Abinadab* (where it then was) unto *Jeruſalem*, which from thenceforth became the ſolemn ſeat, both of Religion, and of the Kingdom. And here by the way we may obſerve the Piety and Zeal of this good King, in that, together with the well ſetling of the Civil State, he took into his Princely conſideration the right ordering of affairs in reference to the Church and houſe of God.

Accordingly, he calls unto him the choſen men of *Iſrael*, and ſo with one unanimous conſent they chearfully ſet upon the work. And although their firſt attempt miſcarried, by reaſon of ſome failing in the manner, at which God was diſpleaſed: yet their ſecond endeavours (which were undertaken with better caution, and more regularity of Devotion) obtained a better ſucceſſe; for (as we read, 2 *Sam.* 6. 15, &c.) *They brought up the Ark of the Lord with ſhouting, and with the ſound of the trumpet*

trumpet, and set it in his place, in the midst of the Tabernacle that David had pitched for it. Their failing at the first time was, partly in that *Uzzah*, being but an ordinary Levite, presumed to touch the body of the Ark, which God allowed not to any but the Priests: and partly for that (in imitation of the Philistines) they carried the Ark upon a Cart, whereas God had required that it should not have been borne, but upon the shoulders of the Levites. The error in both these was now at this second time reformed, and so the work succeeded to content. * So then, though the intentions of Men in meddling with the things of God be never so right, yet the success will not answer our desires, unless it be managed by such hands, as God hath called and consecrated to the work.

* See 1 *Chron.* 15. 1, 2, 12, 13. verses.

Well, now all is right, and on they go, as full of Joy as of Devotion: and to further them in both these, the King (as it is conceived by most Expositors) had furnisht them aforehand with this Psalm, with a charge to sing it by the way, as the Ark of God was thus carrying up unto *Jerusalem*; and for this cause partly, and partly also (it may be) for that it was to be sung with an elevated voice, it was called *a Psalm of Ascensions* or *Degrees*.

An excellent Psalm indeed, and very opposite unto the occasion, whereupon it was composed. It is of a mixt kinde, as containing in it expressions of several sorts: for it begins with Joy and Exaltation; it goes on with Praise and Commendation; and then concludes, partly with Exhortation to the People, and partly with Protestation for his own particular.

The Exhortation takes up the two first verses wherein this good Prince professeth his joy for the gratious temper of his people, expressed in their chearfull forwardness, to frequent the place of Gods publick worship, and their resolution to be constant in their holy performances of that kinde. *I was glad* (saith he) *when*

they ſaid unto me, let us go into the houſe of the Lord: our feet ſhall ſtand within thy gates, O Jeruſalem. See here, how much a zealous and well ordered people in the matters of Gods worſhip do contribute to the comfort of their Prince: and how apt a good Prince is to rejoyce in their well-doing, eſpecially of that kinde.

The commendation follows in the three next verſes, and ſets forth the praiſes of *Jeruſalem* in a threefold reference, that is to ſay, Firſt, to the unanimity and ſweet agreement of the Inhabitants among themſelves, *Jeruſalem* (ſaith he) *is built as a City that is compact together*, verſ. 3. Secondly, to their devout and holy deportment towards God, *Thither* (ſaith he) *the Tribes go up, the Tribes of the Lord, unto the Teſtimony of Iſrael, to give thanks unto the Name of the Lord*, verſ. 4. Thirdly, to their care of Juſtice in the equal diſtribution of rewards, *For there* (ſaith he) *are ſet Thrones of judgement, the Thrones of the houſe of David*, verſ. 5. Lo here, the three great Ornaments, and indeed the ſtrong ſupports of a Kingdom, or Commonwealth, Love, Religion and Juſtice.

The exhortation, which he annexeth to both the former, is briefly ſum'd up in the two next verſes, wherein he adviſeth them (every one in his place) to ſollicite the Throne of Grace for the confirmation of this their ſweet accord and proſperous condition, without being interrupted by any, either hoſtile oppoſition from without, or unbrotherly diſſention from within. The firſt, in theſe words, *Pray for the Peace of Jeruſalem; they ſhall* (or as ſome read, *let them*) *proſper that love thee*, verſ. 6. The ſecond, in the next words, wherein he adviſeth them to pray again, and ſay, *Peace be within thy walls, and Proſperity within thy Palaces*, verſ. 7. whence we may obſerve, that the favours which God indulgeth to a Church or State, are rendred the more comfortable and laſting by the bleſſing of Peace ſuperadded to them; and that therefore in the midſt of all our enjoyments, we muſt beg that bleſſing at Gods hand, yea and call in others

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to concurre and joyn with us in their Devotions for that end.

In the laſt place, the Proteſtation, which King *David* maketh for himſelf, and wherewith he concludeth the whole Pſalm, is fairly laid down in the two laſt verſes, wherein he ſeriouſly declares his own hearty intentions to practiſe what he did adviſe, and to do in his own perſon what he would gladly ſhould be done of others alſo. The inference is, as if he had thus ſaid unto the people then about him, You may perceive by what I have already ſpoken, how greatly your forward zeal towards the houſe of God hath affected me to joy: and I have laboured (as I could) to blow up that zeal of yours in a greater flame, partly by minding you of the manifold bleſſings of God upon this place; and partly by exhorting you (as much as in you lies) to promote the peace and welfare of it; that ſo, not only you for your own particulars, but your Poſterity alſo after you, may live happily under the continuance of theſe mercies, and in your ſeveral ſucceſſive generations all along enjoy this liberty of coming into Gods Courts, and partaking in his holy Ordinances. This I have urged: and yet, I would not herein be miſ-underſtood, as if, while I call upon you for this performance, I my ſelf would be exempted; or as if (in all this) I had no further aym, than only the ſecuring of my own affairs: No ſurely, but I will joyn with you in this good work, and bring on the beſt of my endeavours for it; and that alſo, upon four other and better motives, than my own Perſonal or Domeſtical concernments. I can with truth enough ſay unto *Jeruſalem* her ſelf, for whom I plead before you, *For my Brethren and Companions ſake, I will now ſay, Peace be within thee: becauſe of the Houſe of the Lord our God, I will ſeek thy Good.* This I conceive to be the inference of theſe words upon the former: and from hence we may conclude the ſweet temper and candid diſpoſition of this godly Prince, in that, while he com-

commended ſo pious a duty to the obſervance of his people, he was no leſſe forward to lead them to it by his own example.

And thus having brought you home to the words of my Text, let us now ſtay a while, and take a view of them as they lye; They are elegantly brought in by the way of Apoſtrophe, wherein this good King, though in the hearing of the people, doth yet for the while look off from them, and turn his ſpeech unto *Jeruſalem*, profeſſing his hearty zeal for the promoting of her welfare, together with the motives inducing him thereunto. "They are in effect, as if in other words he had thus "ſaid, Thy inhabitants, O *Jeruſalem*, and the reſt of "thy free Deniſons, whoſe weal dependeth upon thy "ſafety, are of my near and dear Relation. I look upon them, firſt as my *Brethren*, not in the fleſh only, but "in the faith; and then, as my *Companions*, not meerly "in the participation of the ſame outward bleſſings, but "in the profeſſion and practiſe of the ſame holy Worſhip: and therefore, even for their ſakes, as much as "for my own, I will now ſay, *Peace be within thee.* Not "only, Peace from without, but a bleſſed immunity from "the violence of foreign Power; (though that alſo I "wiſh) but Peace alſo within by a ſweet accord and "loving agreement of thy Children among themſelves. "Nay further yet, thou art (O *Salem*) the ſeat of Religion, the place where God hath ſet his holy Tabernacle, and the Ark of his preſence, where alſo he gives "forth his holy Oracles, and requireth our Service, and "communicateth his Bleſſings unto us his people in a "more ſpecial manner: and therefore, even in this regard, *Becauſe of the houſe of the Lord our God, I will* (yet "much more) *ſeek thy Good.* Seek it (I ſay) not by my "Prayers only, but by my endeavours too; not only "my tongue, but my heart, yea my hand and all, ſhall "contribute what they can toward thy preſervation and "welfare." This is (as I conceive alſo) the true

ſtrain

ſtrain of theſe words being indeed no other than a holy mixture of reſolution and reaſon, while he ſayes, *For my Brethren and Companions ſakes, I will now ſay, Peace be within thee, becauſe of the houſe of the Lord our God, I will ſeek thy Good.*

Words worthy to be written in Letters of Gold, and to be treaſured up in our deareſt remembrance, that ſo they may ſerve unto us as a pattern, whereby to regulate and ſquare our practice: which alſo that we may the better do, let us ſee the particular oppreſſions, as they are here couched in the Apoſtrophe of King *David* to his *Jeruſalem*. Firſt, he tells her what he will ſay, and what he is reſolved to do in her behalf: What he will ſay, I will ſay now, *Peace be within thee*: what he will do, *I will ſeek thy good*. Her peace and welfare is the main of his intendment; and for the compaſſing of that, he will bring on all his endeavour: he will not only wiſh well, but do well to his power: he will begin at the heart, but not reſt there: all that he is, and all that he hath, ſhall be employed about it. Secondly, he acquaints her with the grounds and motives, whereupon he took this reſolution to himſelf, and they are ſpecially two; the one more civil, an Argument taken from Humanity, *For my Brethren and Companions ſake*; the other more ſacred, an Argument drawn from Religion and Piety, *Becauſe of the houſe of the Lord our God*. Theſe were (as indeed they thought) among the chiefeſt motives, which quickned him up to this performance, that is to ſay, a tender regard to the good of his Brethren, with whom he was in communion; and a hearty well-wiſhing to the thriving of Religion, and the ſervice of God, in that place where he had his being.

By this time I hope you ſee in ſome meaſure, the drift and meaning of theſe words: I ſhall now proceed to make ſome Obſervations from the whole; and indeed (as you may perceive) the Text is very fruitfull in that kind; all which, if preſſed, would ſeaſonably conduce

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to our instruction. But because the time, and the busi-nesse which is to follow, will not permit me to insist upon many, I shall only (for this present) fasten upon one, which you may take (if you please) in these words, That, *It is both the duty and property of a Godly man, to be affectionately zealous for the peace and welfare, as of the Church in general, so of that Church in special, to which (in a more immediate manner) he doth relate.* A point of needfull consideration at all times, but especially now; and accordingly I shall give you, first the proof of it, as by plain testimony from the Scripture, so by many very pregnant reasons from the Bowels of my Text; and then after a short Application of the whole, commend both you and all that hath been or shall be spoken by me, to the good blessing of God. And the Lord for Christs sake so enable me to speak, and you to hear, that in the mutual discharge of our several duties, his Name may be glorified, his Church comforted, and our poor Souls edified.

First then, I say this is a good mans duty, such a duty as I confesse we owe (in some sort) to the whole community of Mankind, for even they also (though in somewhat a larger sence) are our Brethren and Companions; and it is likewise possible (if God will) that they may be brought within the compasse of Gods house, and therefore we may not altogether exclude them, either from our well-wishing, or well-doing in their behalf, as occasion shall present. The very Law of Humanity doth oblige us to the contrary; But then, in a more special manner, we owe all this to the Society of the Saints, as those with whom we are more nearly linked, and to whom we stand in a more intimate and dear Relation. As therefore the bond of Nature prompts us to do good unto all, so the bond of Grace calls upon us to do our best for these, in a more singular regard.

This surely was the Judgement of St. *Paul*, as you may see *Gal.* 6. 10. *As we have opportunity* (saith he) *let us do good unto all, but specially to them who are of the Houshold*

of

ſanguinity, and Chriſtianity; that you would heartily incline to Peace and Love, and ſo ſtudy the compoſing of your minds, and the tempting of your will, together with your affections, paſſions, and expreſſions, that though your heads may (in ſome things of leſſer moment) have different notions, yet your hearts may be one; and that you may ſay, and ſay truly, both of and to our Engliſh *Sion*, as it is here in my Text, *For our Brethren and Companions ſakes we will now ſay, Peace be within thee: becauſe of the Houſe of the Lord our God, we will ſeek thy Good.* And to this end, among many other valuable conſiderations which your own wiſdome can reflect upon, I do earneſtly beg your practical aſſent unto theſe few Particulars, whereof ſome refer to Almighty God, ſome to your ſelves, and ſome to your Brethren.

In reference to Almighty God, I beg of you, that in the firſt place you would humble your ſelves under his hand, and lye low at his foot-ſtool, under the conſideration of your miſcarriages heretofore, in what kinde ſoever, and particularly of your failings this way among the reſt. Secondly, that you would earneſtly implore the Divine mercy, for his gracious pardon of all that his pure eyes have eſpied to be amiſs in you to this very day, whether habitual deordinations, or actual deviations, in every reſpect. Thirdly, that you would petition him, out of his abundant goodneſs, to beſtow upon you the Spirit of Wiſdom, Humility, and Love. Of Wiſdom, that you may diſcern rightly between things that differ, and lay no more ſtreſs upon the Conſcience than Himſelf hath impoſed. Of Humility, that you may not onely know, but alſo keep within the bounds of your own ſtation; and ſo, meekly and quietly ſubmit your ſelves, where you owe obedience, agreeable to his Command. Of Love, that in all your demeanours you may be ever ſtudious to obſerve that Golden Rule of the Apoſtle, wherein he calls upon us, to preſerve the *Unity of the Spirit in the bond of Peace*, Epheſ. 4. 3.

And this again, the rather, because (as St. *Augustine* plainly tells us) *Non habent Dei charitatem, qui non diligunt Ecclesiæ unitatem*: They have not the Love of God, who do not love the Unity of the Church.

De Baptis. lib. 3. cap. 16.

In reference to your selves, my hearty desire is, that you would practise your own Prayers, and bring on the best and choicest of your endeavours by all good means to compass that which you have prayed for. And, as tending hereunto, give me leave to present you with these ensuing Requests.

My first Request is, that you would distinguish between Theological Verities, and Problematical Queries: in which latter (you know) many learned and godly men have and may have apprehensions contrary to our Conceptions. And here, our Duty is, not to be too confident and forward in our own Determinations. We must remember, we are but men, and therefore not infallible, but subject (not seldom) to mistakes. And upon this ground, it will become us (as sober Christians) to be rather humbly modest, than peremptorily censorious.

My second Request is, that you would put a difference between the essentials of Religion, and the outward circumstantial administration of it: that is, between things of absolute necessity, as prescribed of God; and matters of indifference, wherein our lawful Superiours have a just power to interpose, for orders sake. And here we must remember, that in these latter (seeing God hath not laid either his Command or Prohibition) the Inferiour is bound to submit himself to his Superiour. It is so in the Family; and in the Common-wealth: And why not likewise in the Church?

My third Request is, that you would not believe, that, by the intervening Command of your Superiours about Things indifferent, you are any way abridged of your Christian Liberty. Your Liberty is the same still, as to the thing simply in it self considered; and so you are taught:

naught: onely your conformity to the Command of your Superiours is for the time (while the Command remaineth in force) of necessary observance: I say of necessary observance; for though the thing commanded be still (as it was before) in its own nature indifferent yet the use of it (for the time) becomes necessary to us by vertue of that higher Command of God, which, doth enjoin us (in such cases) to yield obedience to our lawful Superiours.

My fourth Request is, that you would take heed, how under the supposed notion of Religion, you slip (ere you be well aware of it) into the guilt of Superstition. There is (you know) a two fold Superstition, the one affirmative, the other negative. Affirmative, when a man conceives himself obliged to this or that, as a thing intrinsecally holy, which yet in its own nature is but arbitrary. Negative, when a man so judgeth of things arbitrary, as if (in the very nature of them) they were wicked and ungodly. And truely (for my part) I cannot say, which of these two is the greater Superstition. Onely, this I know, that in the second Commandment, where God forbids the worshipping of Images, there also he forbids the worshipping of Imaginations. And to say truth, what else are these Imaginations, than Internal or mental Images, which the fancy of man contriveth and carveth within it self, and so sets them up as the object, or (at least) the Rule of Adoration?

My fifth Request is, that you would not hold your selves bound to maintain for ever what you have once said or done upon a mistaken ground: or that it will be any disparagement to your personal repute, if now (upon a true conviction) you recede from those practises, which formerly you both allowed in your selves, and pressed upon others. I fear, this hath been to many (I do not, I dare not say, it hath been so to you) a great obstruction to ingenuity. But, my Brethren, let us not deceive our selves; for certainly, what ever men

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And even so, O Holy Father, so be it; for the sake of thy dear Son Jesus Christ! to whom, with thine own Majestie, and thy blessed Spirit, three Persons and one God, be all Glorie and Honour, Thansgiving and Obedience, now and for ever, Amen.

FINIS.

ſanguinity, and Chriſtianity; that you would heartily incline to Peace and Love, and ſo ſtudy the compoſing of your minds, and the tempting of your wills, together with your affections, paſſions, and expreſſions, that though your heads may (in ſome things of leſſer moment) have different notions, yet your hearts may be one; and that you may ſay, and ſay truly, both of and to our Engliſh *Sion*, as it is here in my Text, *For our Brethren and Companions ſakes we will now ſay, Peace be within thee: becauſe of the Houſe of the Lord our God, we will ſeek thy Good.* And to this end, among many other valuable conſiderations, which your own wiſdoms can reflect upon, I do earneſtly beg your practical aſſent unto theſe few Particulars, whereof ſome refer to Almighty God, ſome to your ſelves, and ſome to your Brethren.

In reference to Almighty God, I beg of you, that in the firſt place you would humble your ſelves under his hand, and lye low at his foot-ſtool, under the conſideration of your miſcarriages heretofore, in what kinde ſoever, and particularly of your failings this way among the reſt. Secondly, that you would earneſtly implore the Divine mercy, for his gracious pardon of all that his pure eyes have eſpied to be amiſs in you to this very day, whether habitual deordinations, or actual deviations, in every reſpect. Thirdly, that you would petition him, out of his abundant goodneſs, to beſtow upon you the Spirit of Wiſdom, Humility, and Love. Of Wiſdom, that you may diſcern rightly between things that differ, and lay no more ſtreſs upon the Conſcience than Himſelf hath impoſed. Of Humility, that you may, not onely know, but alſo keep within the bounds of your own ſtation; and ſo, meekly and quietly ſubmit your ſelves, where you owe obedience, agreeable to his Command. Of Love, that in all your demeanours you may be ever ſtudious to obſerve that Golden Rule of the Apoſtle, wherein he calls upon us, to preſerve the *Unity of the Spirit in the bond of Peace*, Epheſ. 4. 3.

And this again, the rather, because (as St. *Augustine* plainly tells us) *Non habent Dei charitatem, qui non diligunt Ecclesiæ unitatem*: They have not the Love of God, who do not love the Unity of the Church.

De Baptis. lib. 3. cap. 16.

In reference to your selves, my hearty desire is, that you would practise your own Prayers, and bring on the best and choicest of your endeavours by all good means to compass that which you have prayed for. And, as tending hereunto, give me leave to present you with these ensuing Requests.

My first Request is, that you would distinguish between Theological Verities, and Problematical Queries: in which latter (you know) many learned and godly men have and may have apprehensions contrary to our Conceptions. And here, our Duty is, not to be too confident and forward in our own Determinations. We must remember, we are but men, and therefore not infallible, but subject (not seldom) to mistakes. And upon this ground, it will become us (as sober Christians) to be rather humbly modest, than peremptorily censorious.

My second Request is, that you would put a difference between the essentials of Religion, and the outward circumstantial administration of it: that is, between things of absolute necessity, as prescribed of God; and matters of Indifference, wherein our lawful Superiours have a just power to interpose, for orders sake. And here we must remember, that in these latter (seeing God hath not laid either his Command or Prohibition) the Inferiour is bound to submit himself to his Superiour. It is so in the Family; and in the Common-wealth: And why not likewise in the Church?

My third Request is, that you would not believe, that, by the intervening Command of your Superiours about Things Indifferent, you are any way abridged of your Christian Liberty. Your Liberty is the same still, as to the thing simply in it self considered; and so you are taught:

taught: onely your conformity to the Command of your Superiours is for the time (while the Command remaineth in force) of necessary observance: I say of necessary observance; for though the thing commanded be still (as it was before) in its own nature indifferent yet the use of it (for the time) becomes necessary to us by vertue of that higher Command of God, which, doth enjoin us (in such cases) to yield obedience to our lawful Superiours.

My fourth Request is, that you would take heed, how under the supposed notion of Religion, you slip (ere you be well aware of it) into the guilt of Superstition. There is (you know) a two-fold Superstition, the one affirmative, the other negative. Affirmative, when a man conceives himself obliged to this or that, as a thing intrinsecally holy, which yet in its own nature is but arbitrary. Negative, when a man so judgeth of things arbitrary, as if (in the very nature of them) they were wicked and ungodly. And truely (for my part) I cannot say, which of these two is the greater Superstition. Onely, this I know, that in the second Commandment, where God forbids the worshipping of Images, there also he forbids the worshipping of Imaginations. And to say truth, what else are these Imaginations, than internal or mental Images, which the fancy of man contriveth and carveth within it self, and so sets them up as the object, or (at least) the Rule of Adoration?

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